We claim:

1. A computer storage medium comprising a stored VLIW instruction, which instruction comprises a plurality of operations for commencing execution in a same machine cycle on distinct functional units of a VLIW processor, each non-null operation being compressed according to a compression scheme which assigns a compressed operation length to that operation, the compressed operation length being chosen from a plurality of finite lengths, which finite lengths include at least two non-zero lengths, which of the finite lengths is chosen being dependent upon at least one feature of the operation.

2. The medium of claim 1 wherein the set of operation lengths is {0, 26, 34, 42}.

3. The medium of claim 1 wherein the at least one feature is at least one of the following:

- abbreviated op code;
- guarded or unguarded;
- resultless;
- immediate parameter with fixed number of bits; and
- zeroary, unary, or binary.

4. The medium of claim 3 wherein combined operation types are aliased according to the following table

FORMAT	ALIASED TO
zeroary	unary
unary_resultless	unary
binary_resultless_short	binary_resultless
zeroary_param32_short	zeroary_param32
zeroary_param32_resultless_short	zeroary_param32_resultless
zeroary_short	unary
unary_resultless_short	unary
binary_resultless_unguarded	binary_resultless
unary_unguarded	unary
binary_param7_resultless_unguarded	binary_param7_resultless
unary_unguarded	unary
binary_param7_resultless_unguarded	binary_param7_resultless
zeroary_unguarded	unary
unary_resultless_unguarded_short	binary_unguarded_short
unary_unguarded_short	unary_short
zeroary_param32_unguarded_short	zeroary_param32
zeroary_parame32_resultless_unguarded_ short	zeroary_param32_resultless
zeroary_unguarded_short	unary
unary_resultless_unguarded_short	unary
unary_long	binary
binary_long	binary
binary_resultless_long	binary

unary_param7_long	unary_param7
binary_param7_resultless_long	binary_param7_resultless
zeroary_param32_long	zeroary_param32
zeroary_param32_resultless_long	zeroary_param32_resultless
zeroary_long	binary
unary_resultless_long	binary

5. The medium of claim 3, wherein the fixed number is one of 7 and 32.

6. The medium of claim 1 comprising a plurality of such instructions, of which one instruction is a branch target, which one instruction is not compressed.

7. The medium of claim 1 wherein each operation field within each instruction includes a sub-field specifying at least one of the following: a register file address of a first operand; a register file address of a second operand; a register file address of guard information; a register file address of a result; an immediate parameter; and an op code.

8. The medium of claim 1 comprising a plurality of such instructions, each instruction comprising a format field for specifying a plurality of respective formats, one respective format for each operation of a succeeding instruction.

9. The medium of claim 8, wherein the compressed format comprises a format field specifying issue slots of the VLIW processor to be used by some instruction.

10. The medium of claim 9 comprising at least one field specifying the operation.

11. The medium of 9 wherein the format field has 2*N bits, where N is the number of issue slots.

12. The medium of 10 wherein the at least one field specifying the operation comprises at least one byte aligned sub-field.

13. The medium of claim 10 further comprising at least one operation part sub-field located in a same byte with the format field.

14. The medium of claim 9 wherein the instruction takes up no more than 32 bytes.

15. The medium of claim 1 comprising a plurality of such instructions, wherein at least two of the instructions have different lengths.

16. The medium of claim 1 wherein the instruction is aligned with a byte boundary, but not a word boundary.

17. The medium of claim 13 wherein the format field specifies that more than a threshold quantity of issue slots are to be used and further comprising at least one first operation part sub-field located in a same byte with the format field, a plurality of sub-fields specifying operations, and at least one second operation part sub-field located in a byte separate from the other sub-fields.

18. The medium of claim 9 formatted as follows

<instruction> ::=

<instruction start>

<instruction middle>

<instruction end>

<instruction extension>

<instruction start> ::=

<Format:2*N>{<padding:1>}V2{<2-bit operation part:2>}V1{<24-bit operation part :24>}V1

<instruction middle> ::= {{<2-bit operation part:2>}4 {24-bit operation part:24>}4}V3

<instruction end> ::= {<padding:1>}V5{<2-bit operation part:2>}V4 {24-bit operation part:24>}V4

<instruction extension>::={<operationextension:0/8/16>}S

<padding>::= "0"

Wherein the variables used above are defined as follows:

N = the number of issue slots of the machine, N>0

S = the number of issue slots used in this instruction (0≤S≤N)

C1 = 4 - (N mod 4)

If (S ≤ C1) then V1=S and V2 = 2*(C1-V1)

If (S > C1) then V1=C1 and V2 =0

V3 = (S-V1) div 4

V4 = (S-V1) mod 4

If (V4 > 0) then V5 = 2*(4-V4) else V5=0

Explanation of notation

::= means "is defined as"

<field name:number>

means the field indicated before the colon has the number of bits indicated after the colon.

{<field name>}number

means the field indicated in the angle brackets and braces is repeated the number of times indicated after the

		braces
"0"	means	the character "0"
"div"	means	integer divide
"mod"	means	modulo
:0/8/16	means	that the field is 0, 8, or 16 bits long.

19. The medium of claim 9 containing an operation which is encoded in 26, 34 or 42 bits, wherein

- if the operation is 26 bits, it is one of
  - binary unguarded short;
  - unary immediate 7-bit parameter unguarded operation;
  - binary unguarded immediate 7-bit operand resultless short; and
  - unary short;
- if the operation is 34 bits, it is one of
  - binary short;
  - unary immediate 7-bit parameter resultless short;
  - binary unguarded;
  - unary immediate 7-bit parameter unguarded; and
  - unary; and
- if the operation is encoded in 42 bits, it is one of
  - binary immediate 7-bit parameter resultless;
  - binary;
  - unary immediate 7-bit parameter;

- zeroary immediate 32-bit parameter; and

- zeroary, immediate 32-bit parameter resultless.

20. The medium of claim 9 wherein the operations are encoded according to the following table:

	24-bit operation part				2-bit part	Extension	Size
	bit position						
name	0-6	7-13	14-20	21-23	24-25	26-34-41	
26-format:							
<binary-unguarded-short>	src1[0:6]	src2[0:6]	dst[0:6]	opcode[0:2]	opcode[3:4]		26
<unary-param7-unguarded-short>	src1[0:6]	param[0:6]	dst[0:6]	opcode[0:2]	opcode[3:4]		26
<binary-unguarded-param7-resultless-short>	src1[0:6]	src2[0:6]	param[0:6]	opcode[0:2]	opcode[3:4]		26
<unary-short>	src1[0:6]	dst[0:6]	guard[0:6]	opcode[0:2]	opcode[3:4]		26
34-format:							
<binary-short>	src1[0:6]	src2[0:6]	guard[0:6]	opcode[0:2]	opcode[3:4]	dst[0:6] 0	34

<unary-param-7-short>	src1[0:6]	param[0:6]	guard[0:6]	opcode[0:2]	opcode[3:4]	dst[0:6] 0	34
<binary-param7-resultless-short>	src1[0:6]	src2[0:6]	guard[0:6]	opcode[0:2]	opcode[3:4]	param [0:6] 0	34
<binary-un guarded>	src1[0:6]	src2[0:6]	dst[0:6]	opcode[0.2]	opcode[3:4]	opcode[5:7] XL011	34
<binary-resultless>	src1[0:6]	src2[0:6]	guard[0:6]	opcode[0:2]	opcode[3:4]	opcode[5:7] X1001	34
<unary-param7-un-guarded>	src1[0:6]	param[0:6]	dst[0:6]	opcode[0:2]	opcode[3:4]	opcode[5:7] SL111	34
<unary>	src1[0:6]	dst[0:6]	guard[0:6]	opcode[0:2]	opcode[3:4]	opcode[5:7] XL101	34
42-format							
<binary-param7-resultless>	src1[0:6]	src2[0:6]	guard[0:6]	opcode[0:2]	opcode[3:4]	opcode[5:7] SXX100 param[0:6]	42
<binary>	src1[0:6]	src2[0:6]	guard{[0:6]	opcode[0:2]	opcode[3:4]	opcode[5:7] XL0101 dst[0:6]	42
<unary-param7>	src1[0:6]	param[0:6]	guard[0:6]	opcode[0:2]	opcode[3:4]	opcode[5:7] SL1101 dst[0:6]	42

<zeroary-param32>	param [7:13]	param[0:6]	dst[0:6]	param [14:16]	param [17:18]	param [19:23] XX1 param [24:31]	42
<zeroary-param32-resultless>	param [7:13]	param[0:6]	guard[0:6]	param [14:16]	param [17:18]	param [19:23] 000 param [24:31]	42
<zeroary-param32-resultless>	param [7:13]	param[0:6]	guard[0:6]	param [14:16]	param [17:18]	param [19:23] 100 param [24:31]	42

wherein:

S: signed/unsigned format bit for parametric operations; S=1 if signed, S=0 if unsigned

L: latency format bit; L=0 if (latency=1 and this is not a resultless operation) else L=1

X: undefined value

21. A computer storage medium comprising a stream of stored instructions for execution on a VLIW processor, the stream of instructions comprising:

- at least one first instruction which is a branch target and which is uncompressed; and
- at least one second instruction following the branch target

which is compressed according to a scheme where formats are assigned to instructions according to features of the instructions.

22. The medium of claim 21 wherein the at least one first instruction is stored aligned with a word boundary.

23. The medium of claim 21 wherein the at least one second instruction is stored unaligned with a word boundary.

24. The medium of claim 22 wherein at least one of the at least one first instruction or the at least one second instruction specifies a plurality of operations for beginning in a same machine cycle.

25. A computer storage medium comprising a stream of stored instructions, the stream of stored instructions including

- a first instruction including a format field which specifies an instruction compression format; and
- a second instruction, following the first instruction, that is compressed according to the format field in the first instruction.